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# VALLEY FORGE MIRACLES





To Mrs. J. Aubrey Anderson  
with the kind regards  
of her friend  
H. Herbert Burch

Valley Forge  
Christmas 1929

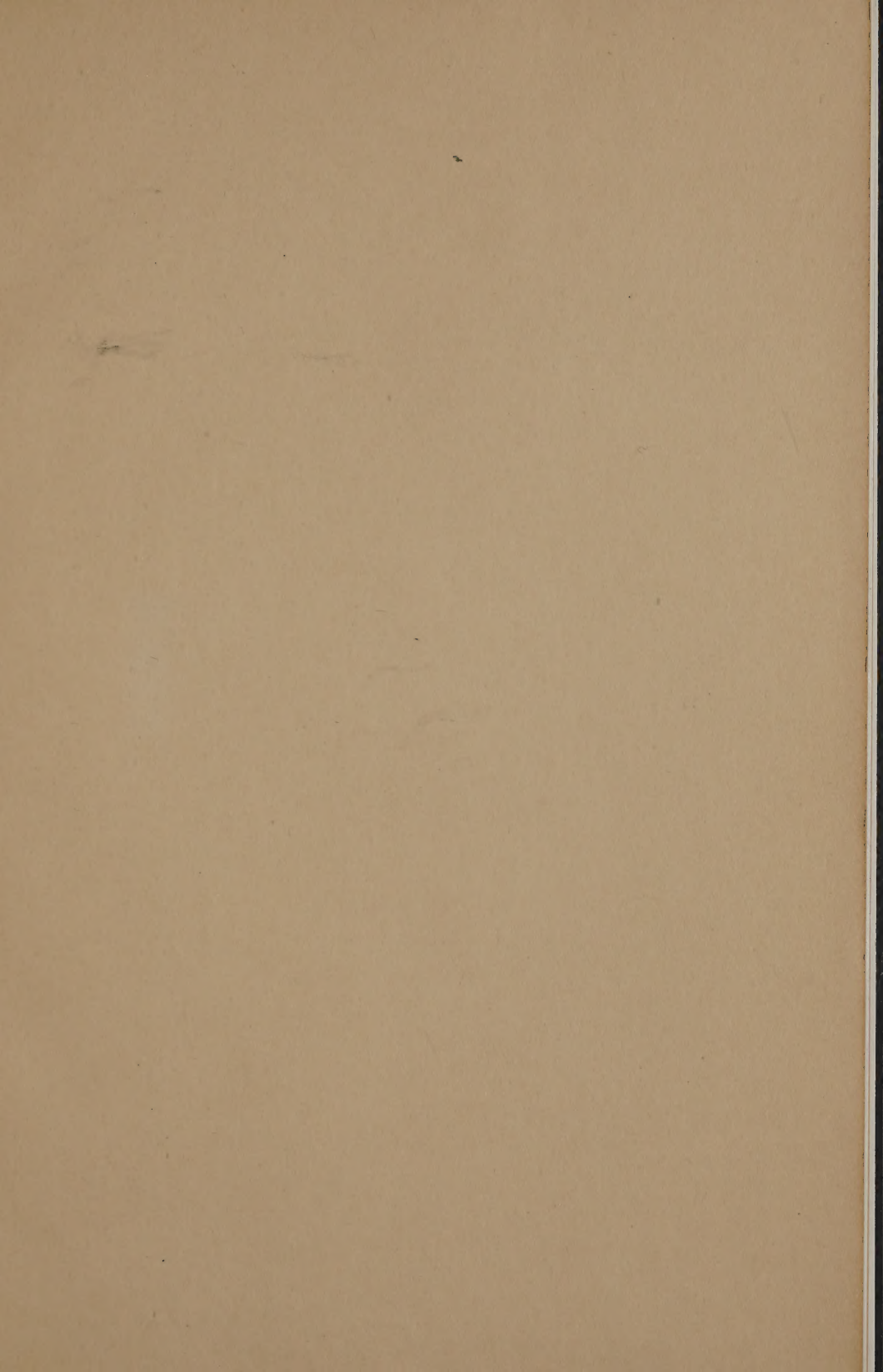
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# VALLEY FORGE MIRACLES



## *A Sermon*

PREACHED IN THE

WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL

VALLEY FORGE

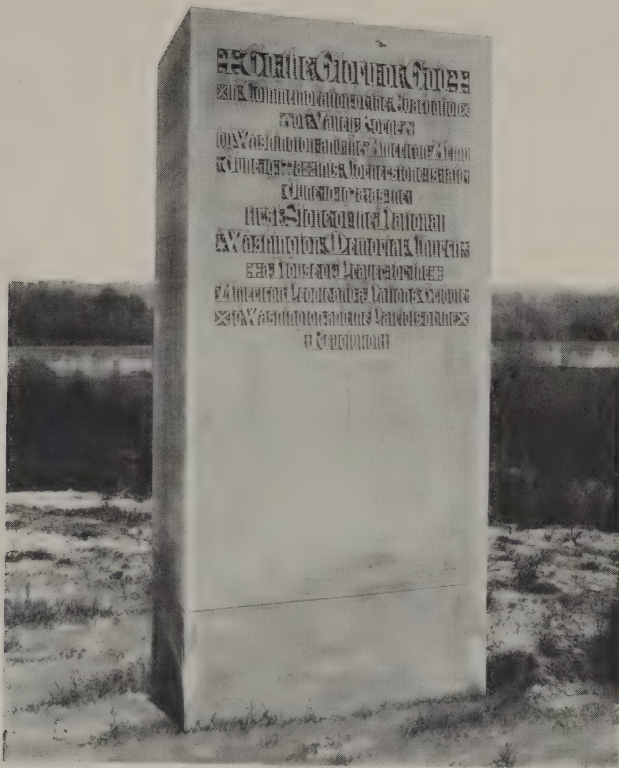
BY

REV. W. HERBERT BURK, D.D.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1929

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W. HERBERT BURK





## SOME RECENT VALLEY FORGE HISTORY

*May 13, 1929.* The Valley Forge Park Commission erected signs prohibiting parking on the ground in front of the Washington Memorial Chapel, ground used for years by the American people. The excuse given was that this ground may have been used for burial of soldiers. The remarkable report which led to the prohibition of parking was prepared by Honorable Richard H. Koch, of Pottsville, Pennsylvania. There was no cross-examination of witnesses and no examination of the ground in question, although this was asked by Mr.

Isaac H. Clothier, Jr., of the Commission. The resolution to prohibit parking on the State ground in front of the Washington Memorial Chapel and the Valley Forge Museum of American History was adopted after Dr. Burk had made an appeal for the rights of the American people at Valley Forge.

*October 9, 1929.* A resolution to condemn the land of the Washington Memorial Chapel purchased for the site of the National Washington Memorial Church, also made by Judge Koch, was defeated by the vote of Edward F. Beale, Theodore Lane Bean, Esq., Isaac H. Clothier, Jr., Fred H. Hallowell, William Provost, Jr., and Joseph E. Widener. Judge Koch and five other members voted to condemn the land. The thirteenth member, Honorable John R. K. Scott, was absent.

*October 13, 1929.* The members of the Washington Memorial Chapel and their friends held a Thanksgiving Service to give God praise for the defeat of the resolution to seize the land dedicated to the worship of God and the promotion of patriotism. The sermon was preached by Rev. W. Herbert Burk, D.D., a member of the Valley Forge Park Commission under Governor Pinchot and again under Governor Fisher. (Resigned August 13, 1929.) After the service the color guard, in the uniform of Washington's Life Guard, carrying the National Standard and followed by a large vested choir led the congregation to the cornerstone of the National Washington Memorial Church. Here the Doxology was sung and thanksgiving and prayer were offered by Dr. Burk for all the children of God.



*And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?*

*And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*

*And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 2 Kings 6: 15, 16, 17.*

This is an old world record, a fragment of the history of the Hebrew Nation, written thousands of years ago. But how modern it is to us who have gathered here today to give praise to God for another miracle of deliverance! Through the long drawn aisle of the centuries it is the same Deliverer, who works at one time in Dothan, at another upon the hills of Valley Forge. In Palestine Jehovah protected Elisha the Prophet; now He protects a little band of American patriots upon the hills of Pennsylvania—God our Father whether we be Jews or Christians. The same love is over all through all the ages, for all time and all space are God's own.

The passage has a new meaning for me because I have just come from my Sunday School at King of Prussia, where I have been looking into the blind eyes of our boys and girls from the Royer-Greaves School, who followed my teaching with as keen an understanding as those who looked into

my eyes with seeing vision. For, after all, blindness is only a relative term. The prophet saw help where his servant saw only destruction, just as those gifted with sight miss much of the beauty and significance of much with which they are surrounded. Physical sight, blessed and wonderful as the gift is, but opens the way to those greater gifts of vision which extend to the mind, and beyond that to the soul. We need, you and I, today to have our eyes opened that we may "Fear not," because we know of a surety that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them," no matter who our foes may be, if we are working with God and for God for the blessing of our fellow men.

If we see this, then today we will rejoice because God has raised up our defenders. They are His agents, His servants. We are here to give thanks for them. We honor them. We revere them. Let us name them with joy and reverence:

EDWARD F. BEALE  
THEODORE LANE BEAN  
ISAAC H. CLOTHIER, JR.  
FRED F. HALLOWELL  
WILLIAM PROVOST, JR.  
JOSEPH E. WIDENER

We are grateful to them because they stood out against the enemies of religion and patriotism in the Valley Forge Park Commission who would have seized the very ground dedicated and set apart for the honor of Washington and the patriots of the Revolution and for the worship of our Heavenly Father. They saved our property which we plan to use for the glory of God and for



the blessing of untold generations of the people of our great Republic. They saved from desolation the field in which will grow the fairest flower of the universe: a House of Prayer, a Sanctuary of Souls.

This service, if this were all, should be remembered with deep gratitude and spoken of with reverence. But great as this service is, it is a trifle in comparison to what these men really did. They stood against ruin and desolation by the ruthless invaders of that sacred right of freedom of worship pledged to every American by the Constitution of the United States of America. This great Commonwealth has jealously protected its citizens in the enjoyment of this great privilege which has made America the haven for all who sought freedom of conscience. Within our borders men and women of all creeds have found toleration for their worship, no matter how it has differed from that of their fellows. Never has this Commonwealth banned the worship of God as conscience dictated. Never in any place, within the bounds of this great State, has the Commonwealth used its power to thwart the building of a house of prayer, no matter who its builders might be.

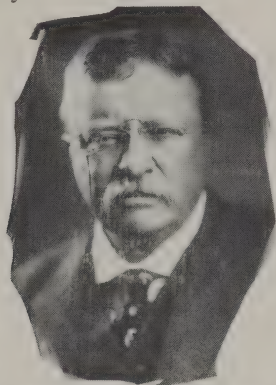
My friends, Valley Forge is the very last place in which to inaugurate a movement for the overthrow of religious freedom. These hills are hallowed by the presence and the sacrifice of men who as Americans were jealous of their religious rights and privileges. Here the memory of Washington abides and any one who knows anything of the real man knows his stand for tolerance, for he detested denominational bigotry. In his army at

Valley Forge were men of all denominations, of all forms of religious faith, and here they worshipped side by side because they were Americans. Here was heard the roll of the war drum calling men to arms in defense of liberty, including religious freedom, but the denominational tom tom was silent in this camp where men faced the great issues of life. It is too late to beat it now anywhere in America, but least of all upon the hills of Valley Forge.

This morning we worship as did the men of Washington's Army, bound together by the ties of citizenship and as members of one great family in Christ Jesus our Lord. Today you and I have sensed the presence of God in prayer and praise, and once more religion has taken the first place as we have become conscious of the love of God as shown in our deliverance. Before the vision fades let me set before you briefly as I may the grounds for my confidence in the help of God. It is this: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

That is written day after day on the record of this work for God and Country. These walls stand here as the monuments of prayer. These windows are glorious with the colors of heaven and they record the story of faith and hope and love. The carved stalls and the illuminated Roof of the Republic above us are all here through prayer or by prayer. These are things you see and know, but back of them are the miracles of Providence more wonderful by far than anything which man has planned or wrought. They are the real things; these outward glories are but the dim shadows cast by them.

This Chapel was begun with two pledges, one for Five Dollars, the other\* for Ten. The task appeared hopeless to all who lacked vision. They saw the difficulties and I saw the opportunity, the need, and felt the call to service. The cornerstone was laid on Evacuation Day, June 19, 1903. The first year saw little progress, except that the frame chapel was erected and was in use before the next Evacuation Day.

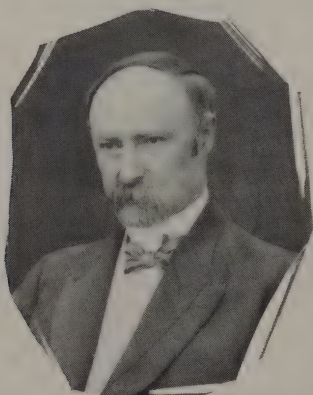


Courtesy Underwood & Underwood

On the very eve of that 19th of June, 1904, it was rumored that the President of the United States was coming to Valley Forge as the guest of Senator Knox. Neither the President nor the Senator had a thought about the great anniversary. Never before had a President honored the heroes of Valley Forge, but on that anniversary day Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, came to the barn board chapel and made one of the greatest of his addresses. That day the Washington Memorial Chapel became a national institution and its building a national undertaking. Where men saw only failure, God gave success. It came not through the plan of man, but out of the wisdom and love of God.



It is hard to keep up public interest, especially if its expression must take the form of the gift of time or money or service. The work went on, of course, for it was God's work, but there were periods of greater and of less interest on the part of the American people. It was in one of these times of slackness that people again talked of failure because the chapel was not built. I planned and prayed, but my plans were inadequate. Monday I must act. Then on Sunday a telephone message told me Vice-President Fairbanks was at the Washington Inn with Congressman Butler for luncheon. The time was short, but that afternoon a great service was held at Valley Forge and another notable address was chronicled by the press of the Country. Again it was God's plan, not man's. To Him belong the glory and the praise.



Courtesy Underwood & Underwood

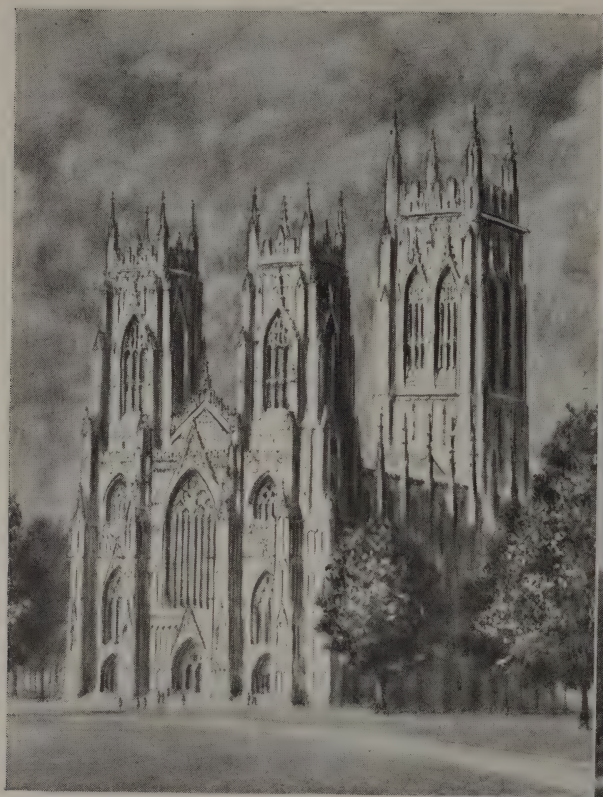
America entered the World War in 1917.

The Chapel had just been completed, although it still lacked most of its windows and choir stalls. On April 13, 1915, the contract was given for the completion of the chapel, which at that time was built to half its height and had many beautiful

memorials in place. This new work was made possible through the splendid efforts of Dr. and Mrs. Charles Custis Harrison, who almost without aid from the Building Committee, had raised the money for this purpose at the urgent request of the Right Reverend Thomas J. Garland, D.D., at that time deeply interested in the Chapel. In the twelve years in which the building had been under erection people deplored the slowness with which the structure rose. But when a national rallying point was needed, when the young men of America needed to catch a great vision of service, and to find a lofty inspiration for sacrifice the Chapel kept watch and ward over Washington's Camp Ground waiting for the tens of thousands of the soldiers of the World War who made pilgrimages to Valley Forge. Its service to the Nation in the dark days of stress and strain led President Wilson to name it: "The Shrine of the American People." From it went forth America's heroic sons, consecrated with the spirit of Valley Forge, and cherishing its ideals of service through sacrifice.

We who day by day were witnesses of God's way with these Pilgrims of Patriotism were filled with awe. Again and again we heard the spontaneous pledge: "I will give a good account of myself over there." And they did, through the help of God.

When the storm clouds of the World War had rolled away and peace once more reigned throughout the world, another President of the United States came here to pay his tribute to the Men of Valley Forge. President Warren G. Harding came

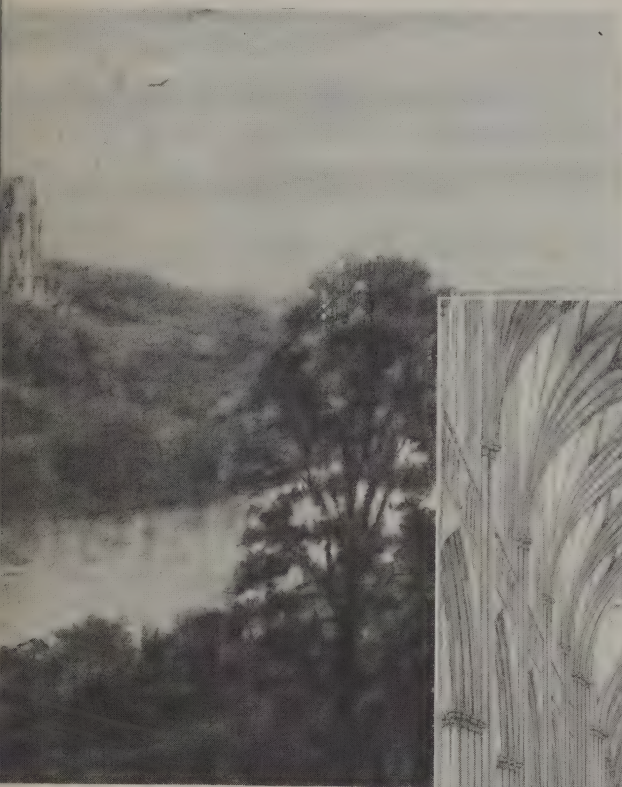


THE  
WASHINGTON  
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THE NATIONAL  
MEMORIAL CHURCH  
ALLEY FORGE



at the invitation of our good friend, Senator Knox. After the brief service in the Chapel, where he occupied the pew provided for the Presidents of the United States, he spoke to over 15,000 Americans from the open-air pulpit. His message was for the Nation, and the press carried it to every quarter of our vast Country. People who heard it beneath the trees of the Woodland Cathedral still speak of it with reverence.



Courtesy Underwood & Underwood

Far and wide throughout all the land his message was borne, but the vision seen everywhere was not that of President Harding speaking from the open-air pulpit, but Washington kneeling in the snow at Valley Forge. Religion became, if only for a moment, the dominant thought of the Nation. Again we see the work of God; not the plan of man.

In 1903, when the site for the Washington Memorial Chapel was given by Mr. and Mrs. I. Heston Todd and Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Todd, the site selected was half a mile away from the Valley Forge Park of 250 acres. Since then the Park has surrounded us and shut us in. Mean-

while the visitors multiplied and multiplied, rising in the Park from 10,000 a year to a million. Here 271,000 circulars were given out last year. The aisles are thronged Sunday after Sunday and multitudes are turned away because there is no room. On Washington's Birthday this year 1,100 Boy Scouts stood in the deep snow too deep for the congregation to reach its expected size of 3,000, and only two Counties were allowed to send Scouts. It was their Seventeenth Annual Service.

When this work was started I called this building a chapel, because I foresaw that it would be inadequate and that in time a larger building would be required. Before the Chapel was completed I faced the need for a larger building. I knew that it would be folly to build a church large enough for a few hundred people when the congregations must be counted by thousands instead of by hundreds. But where could I find the room to build a church for the Nation? I was helpless because a great church could not be built on any site we owned, and the Commonwealth had seized all the other available land. On Palm Sunday, 1927, a spark from an open fireplace rested on the shingle roof of the beautiful home of our good friend and neighbor, Mrs. S. S. Zulich. Despite the efforts of many fire companies and thousands of visitors, only the smouldering ruins remained when the bells rang for the afternoon service. Our entire property was in great danger, as any one can see by looking at the blasted trees still keeping guard over the ruins so near the chapel. Only a strong wind from the North, which blew steadily



for hours, saved us. Again we praise God for our great deliverance.

When I learned the property was to be sold I purchased it for this corporation as a site for the National Washington Memorial Church. It is safe to say that there is no finer site in all this beautiful country side, and no place better suited for a great national House of Prayer.

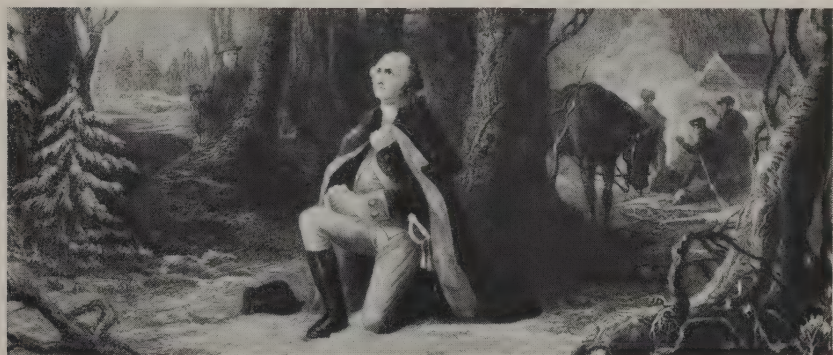
And here let me pay tribute to Mrs. Zulich, out of whose lips no word of complaint over her great loss has come. Instead she rejoices that her land is to be used for the worship of God and she is helping us to consecrate the site as a place of prayer for the Nation. United with her are 3,000 individuals and organizations which have contributed to the building fund of the National Washington Memorial Church and not a day goes by without gifts for the Church. You have just heard of the gift of \$500 for the great Bible for the Church, the gift of Mary Christina Doll Fairchild, in memory of her ancestor who was at Valley Forge with Washington—Colonel Sebastian Bauman.

On Washington's Birthday, 1928, we dedicated the site for the National Washington Memorial Church to the Glory of God and in honor of Washington and the Patriots of the Revolution and broke the ground for a House of Prayer for the American People. The Cornerstone of the Church was laid with impressive Masonic rites on Evacuation Day, 1928—June 19, thus carrying out the Washington tradition, for he as Grand Master laid the cornerstone of the Capitol of the United States.

The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, Free and Accepted Masons, had charge of the ceremonies. The stone was laid by the Grand Master, J. Willison Smith, who had the honor of beginning the actual building of the National Washington Memorial Church. The stone itself is a monument commemorating the Evacuation of Valley Forge by Washington and the American Army June 19, 1778.

One wonders why any American could presume to lift a finger against the promotion of worship upon these hillsides of history, or to say a word against the building of a House of Prayer at Valley Forge in honor of Washington and the Patriots of the Revolution. Only ignorance of the place and of Washington's spirit could permit the tongue to utter a word of protest against such a sacred service to the citizens of our Republic.

Our work for the Nation is based upon Washington's own appeal to the men who made Valley Forge a synonym of the greatest and the best in our Nation's life. In addressing the troops here he said:



“While we are Zealously performing the duties of good Citizens & Soldiers, we certainly ought not to be Inattentive to the higher duties of Religion. To the distinguish’d Character of Patriot, it Should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguish’d Character of Christians.”

For more than a quarter of a century I have labored for my Country with these words engraved upon the tablets of my heart. My whole aim has been to make them real for my fellow citizens. I have had them cut in the stone of the porch of the Chapel. I have built the Chapel to typify religious thought and to develop it throughout our Country and have created the Valley Forge Museum of American History to set forth the story of Patriotism in our Nation and to inspire it in generations yet to come. Washington himself represented both of these mighty forces, these beneficent gifts.

Every foot of ground held today by the Washington Memorial Chapel, Valley Forge, has been given or bought to promote religion and patriotism and to keep them alive where they were the ideals of Washington. Every inch of our land is dedicated to the service of the American people, and the Nation is enriched through the service rendered here to the maintenance of religion and patriotism. Every penny received goes to the same glorious national purpose. Only eyes blinded by jealousy, greed and bigotry have failed to see this. All others rejoice in what the Washington Memorial Chapel is contributing to the enrich-





ment of the Nation's thought and feeling along the lines of religion and patriotism.

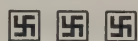
Washington is the defender of our property against all our enemies. No open hostility or covert trickery can prevail where in State or Nation his words are a living force, and if they live anywhere they must live here where he was tried to the utmost, here where he passed through the agony of his Gethsemane. Over against the attacks of our foes, the foes of religion and patriotism, we place these never-to-be-forgotten words of Washington:

“Of all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports—In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens.—The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them.”

This morning we lift our eyes above Washington to his Divine Teacher, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose honor and for whose glory Washington became the Builder of Churches. That cry of agony heard on the slopes of the Mount of Olives came from the grief-torn heart of the Patriot of Patriots. His tears were the tears of One who so loved His nation that He gave Himself for it in sacrifice upon the Cross of Calvary.

At Valley Forge He must be supreme. Monuments may be erected here through the long years to come, but no monument which man can devise will ever so express all that America reveres in the thought of Washington and his fellow patriots as completely or as adequately or as inspiringly as a house of prayer consecrated to the worship of the Patriot of Patriots, the Saviour of the World, and devoted to the service of His brethren of all faiths and nations and kindreds, a Church made glorious with His great and all-embracing love for mankind. Let us build the National Washington Memorial Church as an act of devotion, as a thank-offering for service and sacrifice, and as a place for worship for all the children of God.

## THREE EDITORIALS



*Public Ledger*

Philadelphia, Saturday, October 19, 1929

### AT VALLEY FORGE

An attempt on the part of the Valley Forge Park Commission to take over by condemnation land belonging to the Memorial Chapel and Museum and acquired for religious and cultural purposes has failed. It is to be hoped that it will not be renewed and that the Rev. Dr. Burk and the Valley Forge Historical Society will be left free from further interference. There should be no conflict between those who favor the enlargement of the State reservation at Valley Forge and the supporters of Dr. Burk's plans for the erection of a great national cathedral on the site of one of the country's most valued and sacred shrines. The two projects are not antagonistic. On the contrary, they both have much to commend them to popular support.

The acreage which the minority of the commission sought to take away from those who now hold it was obtained for a definite purpose, the accomplishment of which will add considerably to the attractions of Valley Forge. The historical and cultural memories that already cluster around the site would be greatly enhanced. The Commissioners and the friends of Dr. Burk should work together in harmony to further the interests of this historic shrine.



*The Evening Bulletin*

Philadelphia, Monday, October 21, 1929

VALLEY FORGE CHAPEL

Recent action of the Valley Forge Park Commission in rejecting a resolution designating part of the property surrounding the Valley Forge Chapel and Museum wins the approval of many Philadelphians who have caught something of the inspiration with which the Rev. Dr. Burk has promoted these ideals.

Even those who have not gone the distance which the cleric visions in his zealous concept of the Cathedral recognize the service which he has rendered in keeping this treasured memorial of Pennsylvania constantly in the national mind, and moreover appreciate the accomplished endowment of the religious thought, which in its essence, without distinction of creed or tenet, is inseparably woven in the historic experience of Valley Forge.

The Chapel and the Museum are fitting adjuncts of the memorial park. The Cathedral, if it could be achieved, would be as fitting a tribute of nationwide religious spirit. It would be unfortunate if because of any petty or personal difference of opinion or attitude the inspiring escutcheon, inscribed to the faith of the fathers, should be marred.

The State of Pennsylvania proudly fulfils its obligation to maintain for all time the sacred ground where the heroes of the Continental Army fought their brave fight against discouragement and despair. And in the Chapel and Museum there is the response of the nation in monumental tribute erected by voluntary contributions from a grateful people.

## VALLEY FORGE CATHEDRAL

No reason is apparent why an effort should be made to revive the plan for taking land at Valley Forge on which Dr. Burk hopes some day to erect a Gothic Cathedral. The motion was lost by a tie vote at the last meeting of the Valley Forge Park Commission. The cathedral, if erected, will be financed by subscriptions and, therefore, does not concern the Commonwealth.

The Legislature this year failed to approve Senator Boyd's bill for an extensive increase in the Commission's holdings. But an appropriation act supplies funds for acquiring additional tracts. The acreage now under State jurisdiction does not yet total the maximum allowed under previous legislative grants. Therefore the money may be legally spent for extending the park area.

Since the chief purpose in buying more land is to protect the shrine from undesirable encroachments of a commercial or industrial character, the cathedral site need not be affected; for it does not come within that class of zoning. The proposed building would be no more out of keeping with atmosphere and environment of Valley Forge than the present Washington Memorial Chapel, which is popularly cherished with a warm regard and felt to fit appropriately into the patriotic landscape.





















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